

Glossitis

What is Glossitis?

Glossitis is an abnormality of the tongue that results from inflammation.

Description

Changes in the appearance of the tongue may be a primary tongue disorder, or it may be a symptom of other disorders. Glossitis occurs when there is acute or chronic inflammation of the tongue. It causes the tongue to swell and change color. Finger-like projections on the surface of the tongue (papillae) are lost, causing the tongue to appear smooth. Also see geographic tongue.

Causes

- Bacterial or viral infections (including oral herpes simplex)
- Mechanical irritation or injury from burns, rough edges of teeth or dental appliances, or other trauma
- Exposure to irritants such as tobacco, alcohol, hot foods, or spices
- Allergic reaction to toothpaste, mouthwash, breath fresheners, dyes in candy, plastic in dentures or retainers, or certain blood-pressure medications (ACE inhibitors)
- Disorders such as iron deficiency anemia, pernicious anemia and other B-vitamin deficiencies, oral lichen planus, erythema multiform, aphthous ulcers, pemphigus vulgaris, syphilis, and others. Occasionally, glossitis can be inherited.